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EDITORS' TABLE.

EDITORS: A. S. PACKARD AND E. D. COPE.

—— The principles which underlie the doctrine of evolution are the unity of organization and the derivation of modern types of beings from a primitive germ. While the theory of descent has rehabilitated philosophy, the leading historians, such as Greene, Freeman and others, have studied and are studying history in the inductive method, and, like the evolutional naturalist or philosopher, or social scientist, go back to the beginning of things historical, detecting, for example, in the early stages of German culture the germs of our democratic system of representation and self-government.

Another set of workmen, the philologists, have long and independently, perhaps, of any influence from naturalists, adopted the methods of the palæontologists and discovered a primitive Aryan prototype of certain of our more modern as well as so-called ancient dialects; and now come the students of the world's alphabets, notably Dr. Taylor and Professor A. H. Sayce, who avowedly confess their inability to work out lasting results without having recourse to modern scientific methods, particularly the doctrine of evolution from a primitive germ.

It appears that the world's alphabets are "all but the manifest developments of a single germ." That germ was the hieroglyphics of Egypt, the running form of which was the selected characters of the Egyptian hieratics. These were adopted by the Phœnicians, who carried them to Greece. The Greek alphabet took its Hellenic shape by the addition of four new characters (φ, χ, ψ and υ), probably, Mr. Sayce claims, derived from the Hittites. Finally a great variety of alphabets belonging to different ages and localities arose, and it was "not until about 400 B. C., when the local dialects began to yield to the 'common' Greek of literary Athens, that the local alphabets also fell into disuse and were superseded by the common 'Ionic' alphabet of twenty-four letters."

Mr. Sayce farther tells us that one of the Greek alphabets, the Euboeic, "was the source of all those which were employed in Italy, * * * * and modern research has now demonstrated, to use the words of Dr. Taylor, 'that all the Italic alphabets were developed on Italian soil out of a single primitive type.' "

Using the identical words of a Darwinian botanist or zoölogist, Professor Sayce goes on to remark: "In the struggle for existence, the Latin alphabet alone survived among its Italian compeers, and was carried, by the extension of the Roman empire, through the length and breadth of western Europe. Most of our modern European alphabets are its direct offspring."

In Russia and other Slavonic countries the alphabet was of Greek origin, as were the runes of our Norse forefathers.

Professor Sayce even claims that "the immense majority, if not the whole, of the alphabets used in the East are descended, like the alphabets of the West, from the alphabet of Phœnicia. The Hebrew, Arabic and Syriac are derived from the Phœnician, the Syriac being supposed to have been 'the parent of the vertically written Mongolian and Mantchu.'"

"In fact," concludes Professor Sayce in his article on the origin of the alphabet in the *Contemporary Review* for December, 1885, "it is difficult to find any alphabet which cannot be affiliated to the Phœnician, widely different as the two may have become both in the forms of the letters and in the values they bear. Intermediate forms are continually being discovered, which bridge over the enormous distances and explain the transitions that time and space have effected. Even the Devanâgarî alphabet of Sanskrit, whatever disputes there may be as to its exact pedigree, is generally allowed to be of Phœnician origin. With the exception of the cuneiform alphabet of the ancient Persians, and possibly one or two more which may yet lurk in obscure corners of the world, all the alphabets of which we know are derived, ultimately, from a single source. Utterly diverse as they are in their latest forms, the zealous enthusiasm of palæographists and inscription-hunters has succeeded in restoring them to their earlier shapes, in filling up the intervals which separate them from each other, and in showing that they are all but the manifold developments of a single germ. The history of the alphabet, in short, like the history of its origin, is but an illustration of the doctrine of evolution on a large and easily tested scale. 'Scientific palæography,' to use again the words of Dr. Taylor, 'rests on the assumption that no alphabetic changes are ever accidental or arbitrary, as was formerly assumed, but are the result of evolution taking place in accordance with fixed laws.'"

How vividly the language and methods of work employed by these scholars recall the language and methods of the philosophic biologists in their attempts to seek the missing links and ancestral forms of life which complete and unite the chain of being!

——The bestiarians in Belgium have appropriately united with the antivaccinationists in the publication of a journal entitled The Friend of the People. In Paris and in Philadelphia the anti-vivisection societies have modified their titles so as to state that their object is to regulate, and not to abolish vivisection. To such a service reasonably executed, no one should object. However our hopes of rational conduct on their part, are somewhat abated by the addresses delivered by some of their members. It is still asserted in Philadelphia, that no benefit to physiological science has been derived from vivisection! In Paris a lady member denounces the experiments made by Pasteur in the search for the methods of attenuating animal poisons, declaring that it were better to endure rabies than tolerate the (?) cruelties inflicted on animals by Pasteur.

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RECENT LITERATURE.

COULTER'S ROCKY MOUNTAIN BOTANY.[1]—This neat manual, in its substantial binding, good paper and excellent typography, reminds one every way of the well-known Gray's Manual, of which it is, in fact, designed to be a companion volume. It is intended for use in the region lying between the 100th meridian on the east and the Great basin on the west, and extending from the northern line of New Mexico northward to the British boundary. Its range, therefore, includes Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Western Dakota, Western Nebraska and Western Kansas.

There are several features of the book which are especially noteworthy. In it we have for the first time, so far as we are aware, an American manual of botany with the gymnosperms standing in proper relation to the angiosperms. The outline of the arrangement is as follows, viz:

- Series I. PHÆNOGAMIA.
  - Class I. ANGIOSPERMÆ.
    - Sub-class I. Dicotyledons.
    - Sub-class II. Monocotyledons.
  - Class II. GYMNOSPERMÆ.

- Series II. PTERIDOPHYTA.
  - Class I. LYCOPODINÆ.
  - Class II. FILICINÆ.
  - Class III. EQUISETINÆ.

As indicating further the modern views held by the author, a

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[1] *Manual of the Botany* (*Phænogamia and Pteridophyta*) *of the Rocky Mountain Region* from New Mexico to the British boundary. By JOHN M. COULTER, Ph.D., professor of botany in Wabash College and editor of the *Botanical Gazette*. Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor & Co., New York and Chicago., 1885, pp. xvi, 454, 28.